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RUSSIA'S DANGER: ITS CAUSE AND CURE

BY CHARLES JOHNSTON

A PESSIMIST might well hold that the present state of Russia is hopeless; that there is nothing to choose between her military and political condition, since both are chaotic and disastrous. But in reality, I think, there is solid ground for hope, even though the Russian armies are falling back and may continue to fall back; even though political storms are raging, and may continue to rage, at Petrograd: solid ground for hope, because the root of the evil is at last being recognized and revealed, and because there is a growing determination to destroy it.

In order to get a clear view of the situation, let us try to go over what has happened in Russia since the revolution, first taking the superficial view from before the footlights, then trying to see what really happened behind the scenes.

Looked at from the audience, looked at superficially, what took place in Russia may be described somewhat as follows: The abdication of Nicholas II left political power in the hands of the National Duma, and of a Provisional Government, formed from the Duma, and led by Prince Lvoff, the able leader of the Zemstvo Union. There were several ministerial changes, but continuity was preserved, and the great Government departments, with their army of permanent officials, continued to work as before. After a pause, which naturally followed the revolution, the Russian army felt ready to advance. Brusiloff was commander in chief; Korniloff was fighting commander, leading the old group of Brusiloff armies, and, for the first half of July, carrying everything before him, taking territory, prisoners and guns quite in the style of Brusiloff's great drive a year before. All seemed to be going splendidly for free, democratic Russia.

Then came the smash. Korniloff had pressed swiftly forward through Halicz almost to Dolina among the Carpathian foothills when, under no great pressure, since no strong Austro-German counter-attack had been prepared, the Russian armies immediately on his right and left suddenly broke and ran, with the appearance of a huge, collective cowardice for which there is no precedent in the military history of a nation that has ever been distinguished for the heroism of its soldiers.

What is the explanation of this astounding and disgraceful collapse, which has covered a courageous army with shame and gravely menaced the whole Entente cause?

To find that explanation, we shall have to go back to Petrograd and look behind the scenes, beginning a little before the actual days of revolution. Besides the machinery of the Imperial Government, there were two outstanding forces in Petrograd: first, a great body of excellent Russians, with genuinely Russian ideals, sincerely and loyally devoted to the cause of the Allies, ardently desiring that Russia should fight on, by the side of France and England, for final victory. But these good people, these genuinely national Russians, were almost without organization; they had no single, concrete goal to unite their efforts; the long period in which they had no real political power had weakened their will and initiative, and the ten years' life of the National Duma had only begun to call out and train their powers of action. For the most part, these were the people represented in the Provisional Government in the beginning, in the first weeks following the Ides of March. Had they been free to go forward unhindered, all might indeed have gone well with the new democracy, and Korniloff's advance might have developed into a triumph, materially hastening the ending of the great war in a sense wholly favorable to liberty and justice.

But these Russian nationalists were not unhindered. We have described them as the first of two outstanding forces at Petrograd. We come now to the second: the Socialist party, strongly organized, including a large proportion of the artisans of the capital, and with a firmly knit organization extending throughout a great part of Russia. It would seem that, as appears to be the invariable rule in Socialist organizations, the whole of the power was in the hands of a small group of dictators, of Socialist "bosses," who were able to

drive the bulk of their flock this way and that like sheep, and who, while proclaiming liberty and a renewed world, were really a new despotism.

These Petrograd Socialists, like the orthodox Socialists the world over, were wholly fed and nurtured on German thought, their prophets being German economists of the school of Karl Marx. And it is worth while to bring out the fact that, between German Socialism and German Kaiserism, the difference is in appearance only. Both aspire to rule the world; both are prepared to seize universal power by force; both are absolutely intolerant of any form of life or society but their own, both are prepared to thrust their nostrums down the throats of all mankind. There is a slight difference in their phrasing, none in their spirit. German Socialism, the genuine and orthodox Socialism, is simply the paper edition of the Kaiser's *Kultur*. This is why, I think, world-wide Socialism of the German brand is, at this moment, the strongest and most dangerous ally of the Kaiser.

A real adherence to this creed, this cheaper version of German *Weltmacht* and Kaiserism, automatically makes a man incapable of loyal service to his country. He does not want Russia, or France, or England, or the United States to win; he wants Germanic Socialism to win, to conquer the world. He is further automatically incapable of following a pure moral ideal, like genuine liberty or justice; the Germanic Socialist is as starkly materialist and atheist in thought as the Imperial German Staff is in act, and for the same reason: the goal of both is world-wide material power. When he speaks of liberty, he means larger opportunity for material enjoyment; he means exactly the same thing, when he speaks of justice. Therefore I think it is wholly illogical to accuse men like Philip Scheidemann of disloyalty, because he supports Kaiserism; for Kaiserism is the closest realization on earth of the materialist tyranny which the Germanic Socialist desires.

There is this difficulty: many humane men, who seek a better and happier lot for the lowly, who are eager to better the lot of women and children, call themselves, and believe themselves to be, Socialists, and have worked hand in hand with the Socialist parties. But, in this country and elsewhere, these nobler natures are waking up to realities; they are either leaving the Socialist parties—or being expelled from them. When they are fully awake, they will see the

evil of Germanic Socialism, and work vigorously against it.

There were, in Petrograd immediately before the revolution, Socialists of both types, the orthodox and the nominal. The genuine Germanic Socialists, there as everywhere, had only one goal: the international triumph of Socialism, with its confiscation and tyranny. They cared nothing for the victory of the Russian nation, unless it could be made a step towards the world-wide triumph of Socialism; they would have welcomed a Russian defeat, if defeat had promised the victory of Socialism. There were also nominal Socialists, full of a genuine love for Russia; eager to work for the betterment of the lowly; sincerely believing that the Russian character held a promise of better things for mankind. But these nobler spirits seem to have been in a small minority among the Petrograd Socialists, just as they were in our own Socialist party. The majority were thoroughly Germanized in thoughts and purposes. Their minds were full of the Karl Marx dogmas: war between the proletariat and the bourgeois, until the bourgeois bit the dust; war between the enslaving "capitalist" and the enslaved working class, until the "capitalist" should be overthrown. Again and again, these Karl Marxian tags have echoed in the cable messages from Petrograd, in the months since the revolution.

So much for the temper and organization of the Petrograd Socialists of the German school. Their close-knit organization gave them a formidable power; the lack of good industrial legislation in Russia gave them a genuine grievance to work upon; and, finally, the genuine Russian nationalists, of the Duma and the *Zemstvos*, appear to have been willing to accept their aid, in order to overthrow the bureaucracy. How deeply they involved themselves, just what pledges they made to the Socialist organization, what payment they promised for its aid, we do not yet know. But we do know how the matter worked out in practise.

Immediately after the revolution, the Socialist Council of Workmen's Deputies dominated the situation at Petrograd. A clever, far-seeing and dangerous bit of strategy added Soldiers' Deputies to the workmen; and this addition is the direct cause of the disintegration and shameful retreat of the Russian armies—for this reason:

The Socialists, true to their dogmas, proclaimed that the army officers, since they were drawn from the "bourgeoisie," were the natural enemies of the soldiers, who are drawn from

the proletariat. Therefore the soldiers must wrest all power from their officers and govern themselves. In obedience to this teaching, numbers of Russian officers were shot down by their men—officers who, again and again, had risked their lives to save these very men in battle; and the slaughter of these officers has been one main cause of the disintegration of the army. But the more formidable cause was the formation of soldiers' councils, for each army unit, each company, battalion, regiment, brigade, division and corps, who practically took all authority out of the officers' hands; who, even when under fire, held long debates as to the desirability of fighting; some of them even announcing that they had concluded a "separate peace" with their Teuton "comrades."

This formidable act of disintegration was launched by the famous Order No. 1, purporting to have the authority of the Executive Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies; but it was openly said that it was really issued by paid agents of Germany. But the same vicious principle is embodied in Order No. 2, which had the undoubted backing of the Executive Council, of which Nicholas Tscheidze was, and still is, the head. The idea of the Petrograd Socialists seems to have been, to get the Russian army into their hands, and to use it to bring about "the social revolution."

It is difficult, at this point, to say just how much of this work of disintegration was done by paid agents of the German General Staff; how much by Socialists, saturated with German thought and working for "the social revolution." But, so far as the result is concerned, it is not important to fix the responsibility. The lamentable fact to be recorded is that, whether through sheer timidity, or because of obligations to the Socialist organizations, the Provisional Government did not stop this dangerous tide at its source; on the contrary, the then Minister of War embodied these anarchist principles in an Order to the whole army, and the work of disintegration was soon in full swing. The men of the Galician armies who held their councils even while under fire, and who voted to run away, were simply following to its last and entirely logical conclusion the principles inherent in the two famous Orders—the principles so fatally accepted by the then Minister of War. That these soldiers, youthful, ignorant, untaught, should be shot down in thousands, while the initiators and inspirers of their action go scot free, seems, to say the least, something of an injustice.

So much for the action of Germanic Socialism at Petrograd upon the Russian army. Let us now consider its political effects.

When the revolution was accomplished, a general invitation was extended to former revolutionists to return to Russia, whether from Siberian exile or from milder refuges in Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia. They swarmed back, many Germanic Socialists amongst them, with copies of *Das Capital* under their arms, with portraits of Karl Marx in their baggage, with German thoughts in their heads, with German speech on their lips. Many of them, it is now clearly recognized, were in the pay of the German General Staff from the first, and it is freely said that the sudden fall in Berlin's gold reserve was due in part to the sending of lavish corruption funds to Russia; at least, the event lends strong appearance of truth to this announcement. But the others, who were not directly in German pay were, so far as they were stanch Germanic Socialists, at least as dangerous to liberty in Russia, to the cause of freedom and justice throughout the world. They think Germanism; Germanism flows in their veins; they are, as we have said, automatically allies of the Kaiser, just as their "comrades" are in the United States.

Immensely strengthened by this new influx, the Germanic Socialists at Petrograd grew bolder and, as is invariably the case with your real Socialist, more dogmatic and tyrannical. They planned to seize the government of Russia, and then to use Russia to force "the social revolution" on the world. From that determination flowed the intolerable attacks upon the Provisional Government, predominantly from the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies—that is, from the clique of Germanic Socialist "bosses"—that have forced into retirement the whole Duma group which formed the nucleus of the Provisional Government: men trusted by the whole world, like Milyukoff, Rodzianko, Prince Lvoff, who were superseded by Ministers amenable to Socialist dictation. Having captured so many seats in the Ministry, the Socialists proceeded to do two things: first, they did their best to fasten a permanently Socialistic régime upon Russia, by political and economic acts that would, in effect, forestall the legitimate decisions of the coming Constitutional Convention; second, they did their best to bind Russia to a foreign policy essentially pro-German, a policy

intended to give Kaiserism exactly the basis it now seeks, to prepare for "the next war," that war that will make Germans the masters of the world.

This question of Russia's foreign policy is so vital that it seems best to analyse and illustrate it at some length. Here is a characteristic expression of it:

On June 27, at Petrograd, the Congress of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies of all Russia passed a Resolution against a separate peace. The substantive resolution was, "The Congress categorically rejects every policy tending in fact to the conclusion of a separate peace, or to its prelude, a separate armistice." So far so good; there is no fault to be found with that.

But the German agents wrote the preamble, which begins thus: "The present war arose in consequence of the aspiration of imperialists prevailing among the ruling class of all countries . . ." a curious sentence! Of course it is obviously the exact reverse of the truth; the war was begun by one sole cause, Germany's determination to rule the world, and the whole world knows it. But the interesting thing about this sentence is, that it is at the same time a first-class piece of Kaiserist propaganda and a Karl Marxian dogma. The "capitalist classes" started this war, as they start all wars; therefore Germany and her gracious Kaiser are not culpable; therefore they should not be punished; therefore Germany must be left in possession of the territories she holds, from Brussels to Bagdad, to prepare for "the next war."

Not a strikingly subtle piece of reasoning; but it seems to have proved too subtle for the Congress of Russian peasants; since they passed it as a part of their "no separate peace" resolution.

A second sentence in the preamble bears the same earmarks: "The Congress recognizes that to end the war by means of the defeat of one of the belligerents would constitute the point of departure for fresh wars, increase dissension among the nations, and lead them to complete exhaustion, famine and ruin . . ."

That, I suppose, means simply this: We must not defeat Germany, because this would make Germany very angry, and she might begin a new war! It is a little difficult to do justice to this. What possible mood of the German mind could be worse, more dangerous, than her present mood of

treacherous cruelty—treachery towards these very dupes of hers in Russia; abominable cruelty towards the peoples of Belgium, occupied France, Serbia, which are under the iron heel of her military despotism? And Germany, far from rankling under defeat and humiliation, is boasting of victory. The worst atrocities in Belgium and North France were perpetrated when Germany thought she was completely triumphant. If there could be any German mood worse, more dangerous to the world, I think the world is prepared to risk it.

But what are the historic facts as to Germany's moods? Prussia, in 1864, defeated Denmark and seized Schleswig-Holstein. So far, that humiliating defeat has not goaded Denmark into war. But did her victory soothe Prussian militarism to sleep, turning the hyena to a lamb? What really happened was that, within two years, Germany engineered a new aggressive war. We generally think of the six-weeks' campaign of 1866 as merely the defeat of Austria. It was really something quite different and far greater. It resulted in the annexation to Prussia of Hesse, Hanover and Nassau, enlarging the kingdom of the victor by one-half and raising its population from twenty to thirty millions. Well, did the defeat of Austria goad her into a new war? Was Prussia softened by the absence of defeat? What Prussia was in fact inspired to do, was to plan and consummate the crime of the French invasion, the spoliation of Alsace-Lorraine, the exaction of the heaviest indemnity the world had ever seen.

Prussia, transformed into the German Empire, had now the longed-for opportunity to dream of peace, of good-will to all men. She did dream, it is true, but it was the evil dream of Pan-German world-dominance, including a detailed plan for the destruction of Russia. As we write very much of it has been realized. The Baltic Provinces and Lithuania, up to the Dwina river, are in German hands; Poland is an "autonomous" kingdom, owing her national and political liberty to Germany! Nearly all Roumania is in German hands, and she is driving hard towards Bessarabia and Odessa. Germany has still more than thirty years left, of the time she allowed herself, to complete this dismemberment of Russia. The Germanic Socialists are pleading that she shall have a long breathing spell to renew and complete her work. Do they and their collaborators at Petrograd quite realize what they are doing?

The work, therefore, of the Germanic Socialists at Petrograd has been almost fatal to the Russian army, highly menacing to the internal political life of Russia, exceedingly dangerous to Russia's foreign policy.

But, as we saw at the outset, there are signs that the better people in Russia, the genuinely national Russians, are at last waking up, and their awaking is filling the Germanic Socialists with wild dismay, inspiring them to outrageous and calumnious attacks. A cable message sent from Petrograd on August 3 throws a vivid light on this situation. The official organ of the Socialist Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, which very strongly reminds us, in its tone and tendency, of a group of "inspired" (and subsidized) Germanist newspapers in our midst, is crying out that the Duma "aims at a counter revolution." This charge has been taken up by other organs of the Left—that is, of the Germanic Socialists. *The Day*, for example, declares that the Duma aims to re-establish a despotism in the interest of property, particularly landed property—which accusation is a bid for the support of the peasants, whose appetite the Socialists have whetted by promises of confiscation. *The New Life* calls a recent unofficial meeting of the Duma a giant conspiracy against freedom. It declares that, as after the July revolt, citizens will have to fight and arrest the members of the Duma.

Very naturally, the Duma has not been silent under these outrageous attacks. At a session of August 1, all the speakers repudiated the accusation that they aimed at a counter-revolution. They declared that the Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies were ruining Russia irretrievably, and that the Duma's only aim was to prevent such ruin. Paul Milyukoff sharply assailed the Councils for trying to dictate to the non-Socialist members of the Cabinet in the manner in which they already dictate to the Socialist members. A sensational speech was made by a member of the Progressive party, Mr. Maslennikoff, who declared that the military disasters and internal anarchy were due to the Socialists. He referred to the Socialists as "a crowd of mad fanatics, adventurers and traitors, who call themselves the Executive Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies." Mr. Maslennikoff declared that the Duma alone could save Russia, but that to do so, it must cease sitting in a corner, afraid of its own shadow, and meet in regular session, and

demand that the Ministers appear before it and render an account of their stewardship.

So we come to this conclusion: We, as a nation, have cordially tendered the right hand of friendship to the new Russia. It will be wise for us, now, to look the facts in the face,—to realize that the hopes of the new Russia are being throttled, her armies destroyed, her territories endangered, her allies estranged, by an arrogant group of Germanic Socialists, determined either to make Russia a tool of “the social revolution,” or to ruin Russia; obviously succeeding in this latter venture. There are also the genuine nationalists of Russia, so far almost unorganized, not yet quite resolute, but representing all that is best in a great and noble people. Let us be very certain that we clearly see to which of these two parties—the Germanist or the genuinely national—we are really lending the aid of our brotherly sympathy and our generous material help. At Petrograd, as elsewhere, we may help the Kaiser, or we may help the cause of humanity, of justice and genuine freedom. Let us be certain that we quite clearly see.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.